

Speak Your Peace: The Civility Project

Building Community With Simple Tools



Look around. What do we see?



- **A world, a nation, states—communities of all kinds and sizes—divided**
 - Change is everywhere, and increasing in both pace and intensity.
 - This is destabilizing for most—perhaps even all—communities.
 - Rapid change, especially the kind that alters fundamental rules, can be frightening.
 - It leads to concerns about loss of direction, loss of status, loss of jobs, loss of economic security, etc.
 - People experiencing such change often start blaming each other and fearing each other, as scarcity thinking sets in.

This kind of change in our world ...

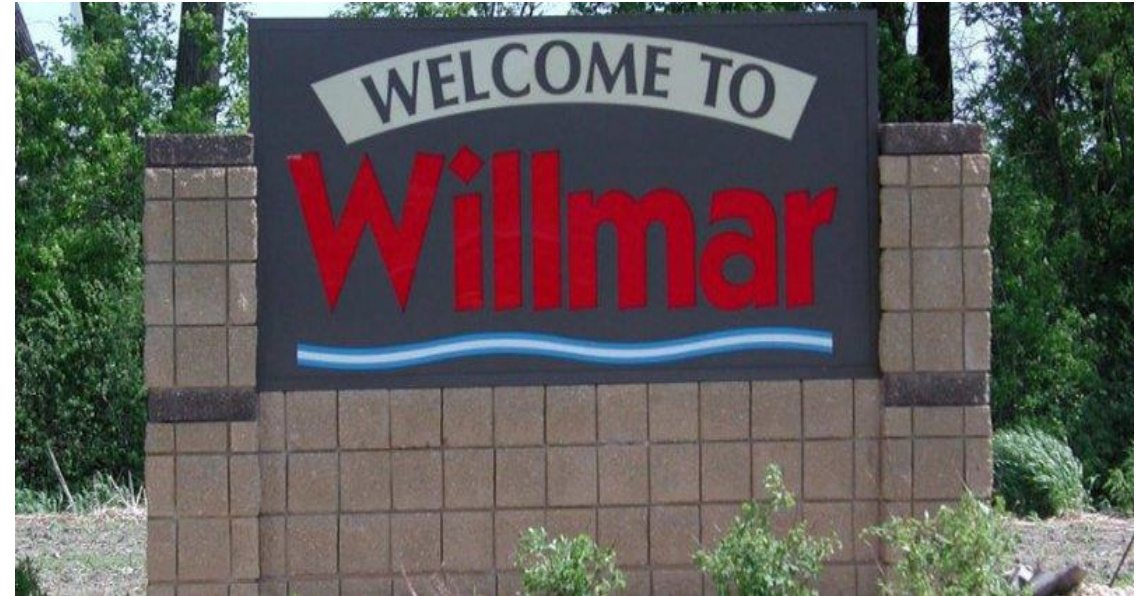


- **Where do we see it?**
 - Politics, COVID-19, immigration—nearly all major issues
 - Rapid changes from manufacturing economy to service and technology economy (with job dislocation)
 - Debate over minimum/livable wage
 - Debates over racial and ethnic issues, changing family and workplace roles
 - Debate over growth, development and climate issues

How is change affecting your world?



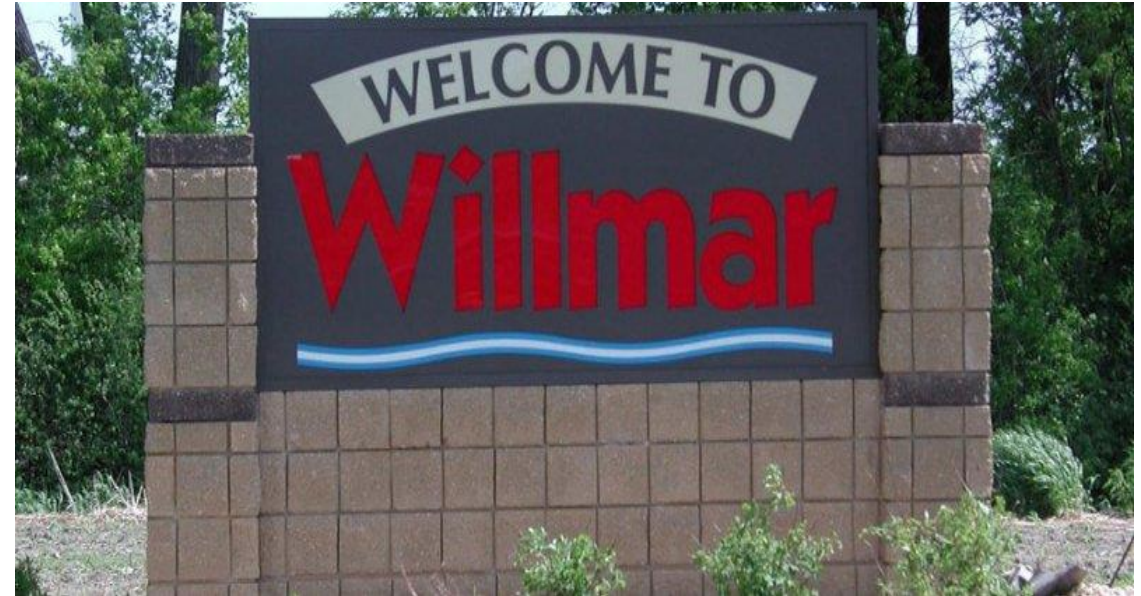
- Internal operations
- Working together
- Technology
- Relationships with constituents, vendors, partners, businesses
- Changing community needs and expectations
- Growth and development
- Generational change



How is change affecting your civility?



- Quality of conversations?
- Working as a team or teams?
- Email, text and other tech 'solutions' posing challenges?
- Relationships with clients, vendors, partners?
- Relationships and engagement with your community?
- Missed opportunities?
- What does this mean for the future of your community?



You're not alone!



- Many communities of all types and sizes are struggling with civility issues.
- Many of these are driven by change—especially rapid change.
- Increasingly, communities realize that they will be successful only if they can harness the benefits that change provides (in other words, there is no holding back change).
- One of the benefits of change is constant evolution and process improvement: new and better ideas coming all the time.
- But communities must develop the skills to use change for their benefit, such as constantly working together to develop innovations.
- Here is where creating a civil environment is vital: the notion of civic engagement.
- This is why we created Speak Your Peace: The Civility Project in 2003.

Where did it start?



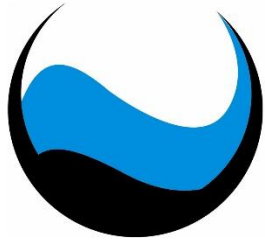
- **Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin: The Twin Ports:**
 - We're at the westernmost point of Lake Superior
 - We're a region of 200,000-plus that historically was focused on shipping, mining, forestry and manufacturing
 - But our economy—and our world—changed rapidly, starting in the 1970s
 - By the early 2000s, the City of Duluth was teetering on municipal bankruptcy
 - Like other parts of the Upper Midwest, dealing with conflict in our region is sometimes a challenge

Why did it start?



- All of the fighting turned off many people
- Young and diverse members of our community especially said they didn't want to get involved

Enter the Community Foundation



DULUTH SUPERIOR AREA
**COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**

- **The Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation formed a task force:**
 - Young people
 - Community leaders
 - Diverse community members
- **The charge: Determine what was wrong and how to fix it**

The solution: Speak Your Peace



Today I will:

- Pay attention
- Listen
- Be inclusive
- Not gossip
- Show respect
- Be agreeable (open to compromise)
- Apologize (heal broken relationships)
- Give constructive criticism
- Take responsibility

The power of civic engagement



What happened in Duluth?



A community came together:

- We started working on difficult issues
- New players came to the table and engaged with new ideas and resources when they saw a civil playing field

Other places it has worked



Sisters, Oregon

The issue: Change brought about by rapid population growth

Other places it has worked



Eau Claire, Wisconsin

The issue: Change brought about by downtown development

Other places it has worked



Madeline Island, Wisconsin

The issue: Change brought about by drug and alcohol abuse

Why it has worked



If we want civility, we have to offer it to others:

- Civility brings engagement.
- Engagement brings people together to solve problems.
- Engagement also brings new ideas and resources.

Why it is important



New York Times columnist Tom Friedman says we're in a New Renaissance:

- This period, like the Renaissance, is ushering in exciting, life-altering changes worldwide
- But it also is leaving many people feeling left behind—or worried about being left behind
- Friedman says this rapid pace of change will continue—and actually increase
- Civility is needed to bring people together to constantly find new solutions when old solutions fail



What does this mean for you?

- First, you are a community with the same opportunities and challenges of the communities we've been discussing.
- Your ability to work together—internally and with key external stakeholders—will determine your success and shape your future.
- Change is here—and coming faster and stronger.
- If you are able to harness it, you can use change for strategic advantage while simultaneously avoid change's pitfalls.
- Communities and industries that have done this have thrived (technology firms such as Apple, with every new iPhone version an opportunity).
- Communities and industries that have not do this have suffered (newspaper industry, for example).

Next steps



- Integrate Speak Your Peace into your operations, meetings, decision making and City Council deliberations in Willmar.
- Harness the benefits of greater civility as you face new challenges and creatively seeking resources to accomplish your goals.
- Civility is the oil that keeps the machine of your city government running smoothly. It also can help turbo-charge your city to new levels of achievement through the power of civic engagement.
- It ensures that you are making the most of what you have and bringing new resources to the table through civic engagement.
- There may be no better time to use Speak Your Peace than now, when rapid change is afoot and you are envisioning your future.
- Start with improving your listening skills (tenant No. 2), using our exercise.

Training videos



[https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste headlee 10 ways to have a better conversation](https://www.ted.com/talks/celeste_headlee_10_ways_to_have_a_better_conversation)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jD8tjhVO1Tc&list=RDjD8tjhVO1Tc&start_radio=1

Thoughts? Questions?



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